

House Resolution 122

By: Representatives Oliver of the 83rd, Gardner of the 57th, and Ashe of the 56th

A RESOLUTION

1 Expressing profound regret for Georgia's participation in the eugenics movement in the
2 United States and marking the centennial of eugenic sterilization in the United States; and
3 for other purposes.

4 WHEREAS, in the early 20th century, a pseudo-scientific movement called eugenics gained
5 popularity in the United States and advocated the improvement of the human race by using
6 selective breeding to eliminate supposed hereditary flaws such as mental disability and
7 physical deformity; and

8 WHEREAS, in 1907, Indiana became the first state to enact a eugenics based sterilization
9 law, mandating the sterilization of "confirmed criminals, idiots, rapists, and imbeciles"; and

10 WHEREAS, eventually more than 30 states enacted similar compulsory sterilization laws
11 resulting in the involuntary sterilization of more than 65,000 individuals in the United States;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, the Supreme Court sanctioned the practice of compulsory sterilization in an
14 infamous 1927 decision by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes in which the court upheld
15 Virginia's sterilization of a young woman in a mental health facility on the grounds that
16 "three generations of imbeciles [were] enough"; and

17 WHEREAS, in 1937, Georgia created a State Board of Eugenics and authorized the
18 involuntary sterilization of Georgia's patients in state mental health facilities, as well as
19 Georgia inmates in state prisons and reformatories; and

20 WHEREAS, even though Georgia was the last state to enact a sterilization law, it performed
21 the fifth largest number of sterilizations in the nation, sterilizing approximately 3,300 of its
22 citizens between 1937 and 1970, the year the law was repealed; and

1 WHEREAS, more compulsory sterilizations were performed in Georgia between 1937 and
2 1970 than in any other state in the nation except North Carolina; and

3 WHEREAS, in addition to compulsory sterilization, Georgia and many other states enacted
4 eugenics related legislation that attempted to preserve "racial integrity" by banning interracial
5 marriage; and

6 WHEREAS, Georgia prohibited interracial marriages for 40 years, from 1927, when it
7 enacted its antimiscegenation law, to 1967, when the Supreme Court invalidated all such
8 laws in its landmark *Loving v. Virginia* decision; and

9 WHEREAS, eugenics legislation targeted the most vulnerable populations in the United
10 States, including the disabled, the incarcerated, the poor, the members of racial and ethnic
11 minorities, and all others viewed as "genetically unfit" and provided a false scientific
12 rationale for discriminatory and racist practices; and

13 WHEREAS, despite the harm done to many thousands of Americans in the name of
14 eugenics, the eugenics movement is largely forgotten today; and

15 WHEREAS, in the past five years, several other states, including Virginia, Oregon, North
16 Carolina, and California, have publicly repudiated their involvement in the eugenics
17 movement; and

18 WHEREAS, the year 2007 marks the centennial of eugenic sterilization in the United States
19 and the 70th anniversary of the passage of Georgia's sterilization law.

20 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
21 the members of this body express their profound regret for Georgia's participation in the
22 eugenics movement and the injustices done under eugenics laws, including the involuntary
23 sterilization of Georgia citizens.

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of this body hereby support the full
25 education of Georgia citizens about the eugenics movement in order to ensure that a more
26 enlightened population repudiates the intolerance and bigotry that formed the basis of
27 American eugenics laws and rejects similar laws in the future.

- 1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
- 2 and directed to transmit an appropriate copy of this resolution to the public and the press.